

Glorifying God in the Fire

George Whitefield

Fire my brethren, not only burns and purges but you know it separates one thing from another, and is made use of in chemistry and mechanical business. What could we do without fire? It tries metal to purge it: God Almighty knows, we are often purged more in one hour by a good sound trial, than by a thousand manifestations of his love. It is a fine thing to come purified, to come pardoned out of the furnace of affliction; it is intended to purge us *to separate the precious from the vile, the chaff from the wheat*: and God, in order to do this, is pleased to put us into one fire after another, which makes me love to see a good man under afflictions, because it teaches something of the work of God in the heart. I remember some years ago, when I first preached in the north of England, at Shields near Newcastle, I went into a glass house, and standing very attentive, I saw several masses of burning glass of various forms: the workmen took one piece of glass and put it into one furnace, then he put it into a second, and then into a third: when I asked him, why do you put this into so many fires? he answered, O, sir, the first was not hot enough, nor the second, and therefore we put it into the third, and that will make it transparent. Taking leave of him in a proper manner, it occurred to me, this would make a good sermon: O, thought I, does this man put this glass into one furnace after another, that we may see through it; O may God put me into one furnace after another, that my soul may be transparent; that I may see God as he is. My brethren, we need to be purged; how apt are we to want to go to heaven upon a featherbed; many go lying upon beds of pain and languishing, which is the King's highway thither. You know there are some ways in London called the King's road, and they are finely graveled, but the King's road to heaven is strowed with crosses and afflictions. We are all apt to think well of being Christians; it is very pretty talking of being Christians, till we are put into one furnace after another; *think it not strange*, saith the apostle, *concerning the fiery trial which is to try you*. What must I do? why, since I must be in the fire, I must thank my corruptions for it; God will not put you or me into the fire if there was not something to be purged away; the grand thing is to learn to glorify God in the fire. *Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires*.

When do we glorify him? when we endeavor to get such grace from the Lord, that we may not dishonor him when we are under the cross, and therefore we glorify God in the fire when we quietly endure it as a chastisement.

We glorify God in the fire when we bear it patiently. It is a dreadful thing when we are saying with Cain, *My punishment is greater than I can bear*; but the language of a soul that glorifies God in the fire is this, shall I, Lord, shall I a sinful man, complain for the punishment of my sins? It is a glorious thing when we can say with a good man, one of whose particular friends told me more than once, that when he was racked with pain, and groaning all night with trouble, he would often say, Lord, I groan; Lord, I groan; Lord I groan; but Lord Jesus, I appeal to thee, thou knowest I do not grumble. Then we glorify God in the fire, when, though we feel pain and anguish, we at the same time say, Lord, we deserve this and ten thousands times more.

We glorify God in the fire also, when we are really and fully persuaded, God will not put us in the fire but for our good, and his own glory.

We glorify God in the fire when we say, Lord don't let the fire go out till it has purged away all my dross. Then we glorify God when we wish for the good of the fire, and not to have it extinguished; when the soul can say, *Here I am, my God, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight*: I know I shall not have one stroke but thou wilt give me a plaister and let me know wherefore thou contendest with me.

We glorify God in the fire when we are content to say, *I know not what God does with me now, but I shall know hereafter*. Do you tell your children that are five years old the reason of things, no; and do you think God will tell us? *What shall this man do?* saith the disciples, *what is that to thee?* saith Christ, *follow thou me*. You glorify God in the fire, when you are content to walk by faith and not by sight.

You glorify God in the fire when you are not grumbling, but humbly submitting to his will; a humble spirit walks not in sulkiness and stubbornness: there are some spirits too stout, they will not speak. When that awful message was brought to Eli, what does he say? *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; let my children be killed,

whatever be done it is the Lord's doing; only, Lord, save my soul at last.

We glorify God in the fire, when in the midst of the fire we can sing God's high praises. Thus the children of Israel glorified the Lord; the song of the three children in the fiery furnace is a sweet song! as are all that are made in the fire. *O all the works of the Lord, praise and magnify him forever!* Then we glorify God in the fire when we rejoice in him, when we not only think but know it best, and can thank God for striking us; can thank God for whipping us; can bless God for not letting us alone; thank God for not saying, *let him alone*: this is to glorify God in the fire. *Not only so*, saith the apostle, *but we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience*. In a word, we glorify the Lord in the fire when we have in exercise, patience, meekness, humility; learning more to distrust ourselves, having a deeper knowledge of our own weakness, and of God's omnipotence and grace. Happy when we can look back and say, thus have I been enabled to glorify God in the fire.

Happy you that have got into Christ's fire! happy you that have found his fires in your souls! I believe many souls have: O Lord Jesus Christ help you to glorify him in whatever fires he shall be pleased to send you, and into what furnaces he shall be pleased to put you: we shall then sing "*the church triumphant*," much better than we sing tonight; we shall see Jesus Christ ready to help us when we are in the furnace: O that this thought may make every poor sinner say, by the help of God I will be a Christian; by the help of God, if I must burn, it shall be burning with the love of Christ. I will say then, O Lord, glorify thyself by snatching me as a brand from the devil's fire. O that this might be the cry of every heart!

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